

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for separating a lump piece of a rosette plant~~splant~~, said method comprising the steps of:
  - gripping ~~a~~ said rosette plant and positioning ~~it~~ said rosette plant parallel to a longitudinal axis of an elongated holder, which comprises a longitudinal opening at least along the longitudinal axis;
  - introducing a ~~part of the~~ lump piece of said rosette plant into the holder ~~via the mentioned~~ by way of said longitudinal opening;
  - cutting off the lump piece along a cutting plane parallel to the longitudinal axis, while closing the longitudinal opening, ~~such so~~ that the introduced ~~part of the~~ cut-off lump piece is enclosed in the holder; and
  - removing the enclosed cut-off ~~part of the~~ lump piece from the holder.
  
2. (currently amended) ~~A~~ The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that the method comprises the further step of~~ further comprising cutting off a cut-off part of the lump

piece of the rosette plant enclosed in the holder along a second cutting plane.

3. (currently amended) A The method according claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the removal from the holder takes place while retaining orientation.

4. (currently amended) A The method according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the cutting off of the lump piece is ~~carried out~~performed by the rotation of two half-round sections engaging each other along a rotation axis, during which the sections cuttingly glide along each other, such that after rotation the sections form a cylinder in which the cut-off part of the lump piece is received.

5. (currently amended) A The method according claim 1, ~~characterized in that the method comprises the further~~  
comprising a step of blowing out the cut-off part of the lump  
piece enclosed in the holder by ~~means of~~using compressed air.

6. (currently amended) An apparatus for separating a lump piece of a rosette plant~~plant~~, said apparatus comprising:  
- an elongated holder which comprises a longitudinal opening at least along the longitudinal axis; and

- a first cutting element for cutting off a lump piece of said rosette plant along a cutting plane parallel to the longitudinal axis, while closing the longitudinal opening, ~~such so~~ that an introduced part of the cut-off lump piece is enclosed in the holder.

7. **(currently amended)** ~~An~~The apparatus according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the apparatus comprises a transverse opening which is oriented transversely to the longitudinal axis.

8. **(currently amended)** ~~An~~The apparatus according to claim 7, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the apparatus comprises a second cutting element for cutting off a part of the rosette plant enclosed in the holder along a second cutting plane transversely to the longitudinal axis, while closing the transverse opening.

9. **(currently amended)** ~~An~~The apparatus according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the holder has ~~such a~~ cross-section and is arranged so that, when in an enclosed condition, the cut-off part-lump piece is clampingly enclosed, so that upon removal a-the cut-off part-lump piece retains its orientation.

10. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the elongated holder comprises a first half-round section, and ~~that~~ the first cutting element comprises a second half-round section, which first and second sections engage each other along a rotation axis and, upon rotation, carry out a cutting movement, ~~such~~ so that after rotation the sections form a cylinder in which a part of a the cut-off lump piece can be received.

11. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 10, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the sections are arranged to carry out an axial movement relative to each other during the rotation.

12. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the apparatus comprises an expelling element for removing the enclosed cut-off ~~part of~~ the lump piece from the holder.

13. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 12, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the expelling element is arranged to expel the cut-off ~~part~~ lump piece along the longitudinal axis of the holder.

14. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 13, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the expelling element comprises an outflow longitudinal opening oriented along the longitudinal axis of the holder for blowing out compressed air.

15. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according to claim 14, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the outflow longitudinal opening is provided in ~~the~~ a second cutting element, so that the second cutting element, after having carried out a cutting movement and having cut-off stems from the lump piece, positions the outflow longitudinal opening ~~such so~~ so that the cut-off ~~part~~ lump piece can be blown out by ~~means of~~ fusing compressed air.

16. (currently amended) ~~An~~ The apparatus according claim 8, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the second cutting element is connected to a backplane of the apparatus with a pair of parallel-arranged leaf springs.

17. (previously presented) An automated apparatus,  
comprising:

- image recognition means for identifying a rosette plant to be multiplied;

- a gripper for gripping the rosette plant and positioning it;
- an apparatus according to claim 6, which cuts off and encloses the rosette plant;
- transport and manipulation means for transporting and manipulating ~~the~~ a growing medium, into which the cut-off ~~cutting plant~~ is introduced; and
- control means for controlling the gripper, the apparatus, and the transport and manipulation means under control of the image recognition means.

**18. (new)** The method of claim 3, wherein the orientation means that the sprout of said lump piece remains pointing in a direction remove from a growing medium.

**19. (new)** The method of claim 9, wherein the orientation means that the sprout of said lump piece remains pointing in a direction remove from a growing medium.